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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001488

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DEPARTMENT FOR D, AF A/S FRAZER, AND AF/SPG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/26/2011

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM SU UN

SUBJECT: DARFUR: JAMOUS OUT; UNMIS FLIGHT OPERATIONS DOWN

REF: KHARTOUM 1478

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CAMERON HUME; REASON: 1.4(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SLA/M Leader Mini Minawi released former SLA/M humanitarian coordinator Suleiman Jamous to UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) officials in North Darfur on June 22, as promised (reftel). Jamous did not appear to have been mistreated while in custody, according to UNMIS, but does suffer from a bad back. On June 24, UNMIS flew Jamous in a UN aircraft to an UNMIS medical facility in Kadugli, South Kordofan, for treatment, with the personal approval of SRSG Jan Pronk. UNMIS admits it did not notify the Government that it was transferring Jamous.

¶2. (C) In response, the Government announced late on June 24 it was "suspending" all UNMIS activities in Darfur, effective immediately, and summoned UNMIS officials for an explanation. Other UN operations in Darfur, including WFP and UNICEF humanitarian operations, have not been affected. UNMIS human rights, protection, and civil affairs officials are continuing their work in El Fasher, but not outside the city. Some NGO staff in West Darfur have also reported they were not allowed to go to IDP camps without permits, though this appears to be an isolated incident.

¶3. (C) As of June 26, all UNMIS flight operations to, from, and within Darfur have been grounded, and UNMIS personnel are not allowed to travel. Exceptions may be made for emergency medical flights, with prior approval; the Government has also approved one flight late on June 26 for Minawi's staff to fly to Khartoum for meetings. WFP Humanitarian Air Services, frequently used by Embassy and NGO staff, are operating as usual, but are not allowed to board UNMIS personnel.

¶4. (C) A senior UN official told us mid-day June 26 that Pronk deputy Taye Zeheroun had just spoken with MFA U/S Mutriff Sadeq. They had made some progress in defusing the situation, with both sides showing some flexibility -- UN promising to be more rigorous in filing passenger lists, and the GNU willing to consider ending the UNMIS ban.

¶5. (C) UNMIS' decision to transfer Jamous appears to have unnerved Sudan's intelligence services, which keeps a close eye on rebel movements in Darfur and UN operations throughout the country. A senior UN official told the Embassy they do not want to make a big fuss over what they hope will be a temporary action. However, they are also concerned Sudanese intelligence authorities might now attempt to seize Jamous in Kadugli.

HUME